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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORE THAN 550 WHEELCHAIR ATHLETES REGISTERED FOR NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES IN MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis – June 24, 2005 – More than 550 wheelchair athletes from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain have registered to compete in the 25th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis, June 27 – July 1. The most recent count included 547 male and 41 female disabled military veterans who have signed up for the five-day event.

The largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, the Games are a joint effort of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and will be hosted locally by Minneapolis VA Medical Center and the Minnesota Chapter of PVA. The Games are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. Up to 20 Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans will compete in the 2005 Games.

Competitive events will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center, also the site for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Other venues include South Town Bowl, Brunswick Bowl, McMurtry Field, Metro Gun Club, Braemar Golf Course, the University of Minnesota, the University of St. Thomas, Lake Harriett, the Ft. Snelling soccer fields and Como Park. The 2005 Games will feature stiff competition in 16 different events including track and field, basketball, weightlifting, softball, quad rugby, a motorized wheelchair rally, power soccer, swimming, handcycling, wheelchair slalom, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, air guns and archery. Trap shooting is an exhibition event this year, as is a power wheelchair relay race. The public is invited to attend the sports competitions at the Games as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Admission is free.

On Monday, June 27 at 11:15 am, a Games Kick-off will feature a wheelchair basketball demonstration at Peavey Plaza, as well as the 2005 Disabled Sports, Recreation and Fitness Expo National President, Randy L. Pleva, Sr. At the Opening Ceremonies on June 27, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson will deliver remarks, along with PVA National President Randy Pleva, Sr. A special first-time wheelchair sports demonstration will be held at the Mall of America on Wednesday, June 29. Thursday, June 30 is "Kids Day" at the Games, when local children will visit with the athletes and learn about wheelchair sports. Commemorative activities are also planned to recognize 25 continuous years of this outstanding rehabilitation event.

- More -

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



From June 29 – July 1, actress Bo Derek, Honorary Chairperson of VA's National Rehabilitation Special Events, is scheduled to attend the events, visit with athletes and present medals.

Beginning June 30, individual news releases on participating athletes, photos and competition results for competitors will be available on the Games web site at www.wheelchairgames.org.

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Media Inquiries:

- **During the Games** - June 26-July 1, call the National Veterans Wheelchair Games Media Center at (612) 335-6668 or (612) 335-6669
- **Before June 25 or after July 2**, call Kim Byers, VA Public Affairs, at (734) 761-7824, or (734) 417-6230; or Bob Ensinger, PVA Director of Communications at (202) 416-7681.

For a full schedule of events or other information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, visit the Games web site at www.wheelchairgames.org

About the Athletes:

The most recent count of registered military veterans in this year's Games include 547 men and 41 women. Among them are veterans with the following combat service, representing the following military branch of service:

Combat Service

- 6 – WWII
- 118 – Vietnam War
- 14 – Korean Conflict
- 33 – Gulf War
- 20 – Operation Iraqi Freedom

Branch of Service

- 283 – U.S. Army
- 121 – U.S. Navy
- 75 – U.S. Marine Corps
- 86 – U.S. Air Force
- 8 – U.S. Coast Guard
- 3 – U.S. National Guard
- 10 – British Military

Types of Disabilities

Athletes registered include 233 paraplegics; 168 quadriplegics; 63 who have multiple sclerosis or other neurological conditions; 24 with brain injuries; 54 amputees. The remainder have disabilities from strokes, severe arthritis, or other medical conditions.